ETCHINGS & DRY POINTS

BY

S. TUSHINGHAM

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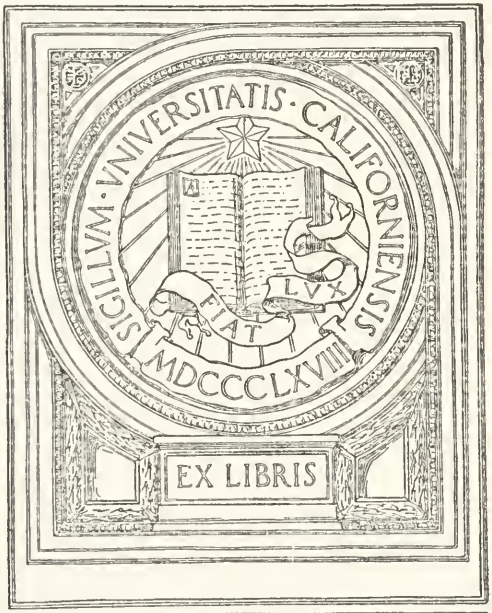

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S. TUSHINGHAM.

Sidney Cushingham.

Etchings & Dry Points

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NOTES BY

P. G. KONODY

JAMES CONNELL & SONS, Ltd.,
47, Old Bond Street,
LONDON, W.1.
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NOTES BY P. G. KONODY.

THE thirty-nine plates which so far constitute the etched *oeuvre* of Sydney Tushingham cover a period of not more than three years.

The very first of these plates, the dry point "Portrait of a Child," wrought in 1919, betrays, however, a degree of experience in the handling of the medium which can only be the result of considerable experimental practice. But unlike some of his confrères, who in the hope of ultimate fame seem to cherish and preserve every scrap of their early attempts and failures for the benefit of some possible future compiler of a *Catalogue raisonné*, Tushingham appears to have kept no record of his tentative and unsuccessful experiments. His Opus 1 is the work of a mature artist, not of a student.

Tushingham belongs to the Five Towns. He was born at Burslem in 1884, and is distantly connected with Arnold Bennett, the chronicler of life in the Five Towns. He started at the age of fourteen as a china painter in the Staffordshire Potteries, and attended, during his apprenticeship, the Burslem School of Art, where he gained the National Scholarship for painting. In 1905 he entered the Royal College of Art, studying

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decorative design under Professor G. Moira, and etching under Sir Frank Short. The war naturally interrupted his studies, and his artistic activity, although his war work was not altogether disconnected with Art, and enabled him to acquire additional experience in engraving and etching. He first exhibited in 1919, and immediately attracted favourable attention by the quality of his work.

In examining Tushingham's plates in chronological order, one cannot help being struck by the steady advance from his earlier "pictorial" treatment to a more synthetic interpretation by means of pure line. Whilst there is a certain amount of overlapping—an occasional relapse in his more recent work to the earlier manner—the progress is marked and rapid. In the beginning Tushingham preferred to express himself in dry point, his first pure etching being, I believe, his 12th plate, "Cheyne Walk, Old Chelsea." Later, his use of dry point becomes comparatively rare, its place being taken by a firm, emphatic, etched line. His early love of minute detail and carefully modulated shading, probably due to his long practice as a china painter, give way to expression by line used with admirable economy, with the white paper ground assuming an ever increasing importance. It is one of the most remarkable features in Tushingham's

recent etchings, that this white background is made to suggest the full glare of sunlight and the atmospheric ambient of the figures and landscape far more effectively than the elaborate light and shade and half tones of the early dry points, although from the first, by liberal use of the burnisher, he knew how to give atmosphere to his distances.

To put it plainly, Tushingham abandoned *painting* with the point for *drawing*. With increasing mastery of his craft, he could dispense with carefully wrought preparatory studies on paper, and began to work direct on the copper, retaining the spontaneity and vitality of a direct sketch from nature. And with this change of method, he advanced from the rather formal composition of a light-bathed vista through a frame of dark trees in the foreground to a form of design no less carefully thought out as regards balance of masses, but apparently imposed by the happy accidents of nature.

Architectural motives play an important part in Tushingham's work. But it is only in his first plate of this kind, the "Bibliothèque, Bruges," that architecture is treated *per se*—that the spectator's attention is drawn to the details of the building. In all subsequent plates he aims at what might be called the architectural landscape. The buildings are a mere incident in the general scheme

—sometimes a mere background to the human activity in which the interest is centred, sometimes, as in the "Old Market Place, Falmouth," a mere vehicle for the play of light, all details being obliterated, and the very windows indicated by touches so slight that the Artist has expressed more by omission and suggestion than by positive statement.

Tushingham is never topographic. He is keenly interested in life and introduces the human element wherever his subject permits him. In the "Old Market Place, Falmouth," "Sheep Market, Bridgwater," and a few similar plates, it is paramount; in his beach scenes of children at play it becomes exclusive. It is here that Tushingham breaks new ground and deserves the thanks of the many who are becoming tired of the endless repetition of the same class of subject by most modern etchers. One can get too much of cathedrals and bridges and ramshackle cottages. It is a relief to find an etcher who is primarily interested in life and who shows such warm sympathy with the life of children. Tushingham's plates of the youngsters amusing themselves at Kensington Gardens or on the seashore are among his happiest achievements, and must be given an important place among contemporary etchings.

P. G. KONODY.

LIST OF
ETCHINGS AND DRY POINTS

1. "Portrait of a Child."
2. "Infant Playing."
3. "La Bibliothèque, Bruges."
4. "Sand Pies."
5. "Barges, Sluis."
6. "The Terrace, Kensington Gardens."
7. "A Picnic, Hampstead Heath."
8. "Playtime, Kensington Gardens."
9. "The Quay, Bridgwater."
10. "Dunster."
11. "The Menai Straits."
12. "Merriment."
13. "Le Lac D'Amour, Bruges."
14. "The Sheep Market, Bridgwater."
15. "La Grand Place, Malines."
16. "Old Chelsea, Cheyne Walk."
17. "Penshurst Place, Kent."
18. "Lyme Regis from Timber Hill."
19. "The Old Post Office Yard, Falmouth."
20. "Market Place, Old Falmouth."
21. "A Collier, Flushing, Cornwall."
22. "Cornish Boys at Play."

23. " Perry's Fruit Shop, Old Falmouth."
24. " Shrimping."
25. " The Mouth of the Fal."
26. " Barracks Opening, Old Falmouth."
27. " Falmouth Harbour."
28. " Customs House Quay, Falmouth."
29. " Cardiff City Hall."
30. " Holiday Time."
31. " A Cornish Fishing Village."
32. " Polperro, Cornwall."
33. " Round Pond, Kensington Gardens."
34. " A Sand Castle."
35. " The Old Mill Gate, Dunster."
36. " Polperro Fish Market."
37. " Betty."
38. " The Merry-Go-Round."
39. " Mother and Child."

PORTRAIT OF A CHILD

Dry point
Size $6\frac{1}{8}'' \times 8\frac{1}{4}''$
Edition of 30 Proofs

£2 2 0

INFANT PLAYING

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Size $7\frac{1}{4}'' \times 10''$
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LA BIBLIOTHÈQUE, BRUGES

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Size $7\frac{7}{8}'' \times 12''$
Edition of 40 Proofs

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SAND PIES

Dry point
Size 8″ × 10½″
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BARGES SLUIS

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THE TERRACE,
KENSINGTON GARDENS

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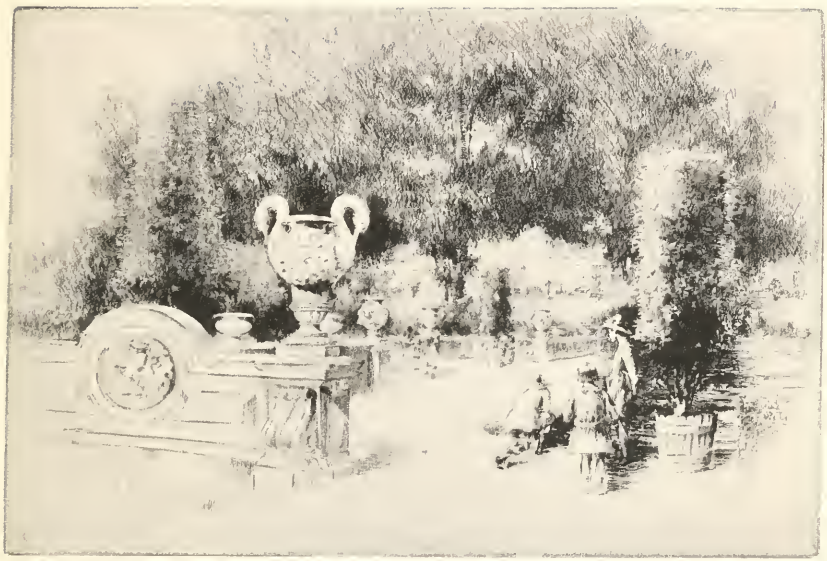

A PICNIC, HAMPSTEAD HEATH

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KENSINGTON GARDENS

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BRIDGWATER

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From Timber Hill

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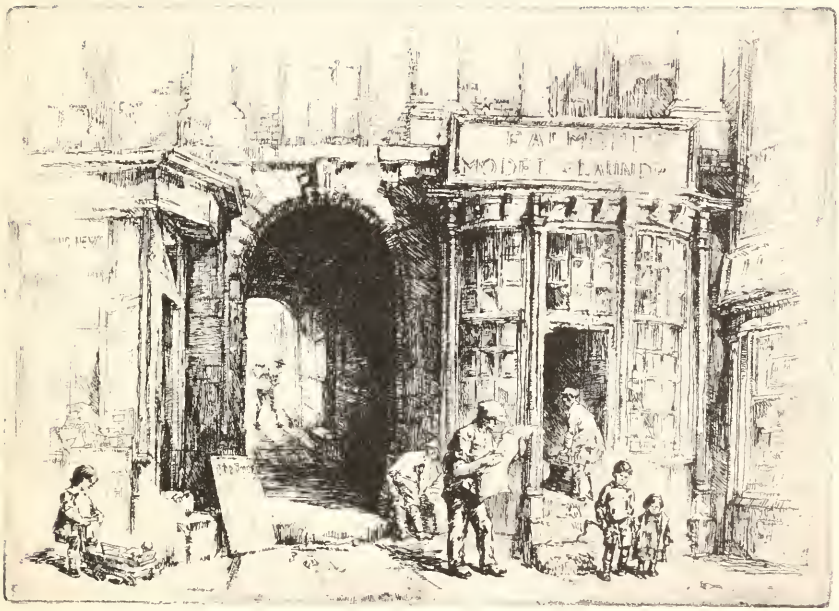

MARKET PLACE,
OLD FALMOUTH

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A COLLIER, FLUSHING, CORNWALL

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OLD FALMOUTH

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OLD FALMOUTH

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KENSINGTON GARDENS

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DUNSTER

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